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INR/I FOR SUZANNE MCCORMICK

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2018

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SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN REACTION TO ANTI ISLAM VIDEO (C-DI8-00223)

REF: SECSTATE 20818

Classified By: Minister-Counselor for Economic and Political Affairs  
William R. Stewart, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Per reftel request, we detail below various Egyptian reactions to the anticipated upcoming release of Dutch MP Geert Wilder's short film:

- Ministry of Foreign Affairs: On February 22, MFA spokesman Hossam Zaki released a statement noting that, "Egypt is closely following all relevant developments on this issue, including the reactions and demarches made by official and unofficial bodies whether in the Netherlands, or in other European countries in general." Zaki stated that, "it is regrettable that European politicians should resort to cheap methods to win electoral votes by offending other sacred religions and places, .... feeding hatred against Muslims, and encouraging more extremism and confrontation instead of resorting to dialogue based on respect." The spokesman said that FM Ahmed Aboul Gheit had instructed Egyptian embassies in Europe to continue "following up on the issue," to make combating the defamation of religion the priority issue on the international human rights agenda, and to follow up on this initiative at the UN General Assembly and UN Human Rights Council.

- Parliament: During a March 2 session of the Shura Council (Egypt's upper parliamentary house), Minister of Islamic Endowments Hamdy Zagzoug warned against Wilder's film. Zagzoug called on the Islamic world "to employ its mammoth economic force to exert pressure on influential major powers to obtain binding international resolutions against the contempt of religion." He also recommended that a "reasonable and positive initiative" might be to translate the "Sunna of Mohamed" into different languages, so that the world might better understand the Prophet's life and traditions.

- Muslim Brotherhood (MB): On January 28, the MB issued a formal statement critical of the film, but noting that, "Despite the flagrant violation of freedom of belief in Wilder's speeches and his movie, we call for avoiding riots and violent reactions, and instead concentrating on a constructive dialogue with non-Muslims to refute the claims of Geert Wilders or anyone who misunderstands Islam." The MB's Deputy Supreme Guide, Mohamed Habib, commented, "We endorse freedom because we consider it an obligation on every human being. However, there is an enormous difference between freedom and deliberate offense. Therefore, we completely reject any attempt to provoke Muslims, and we expect western societies to respect Muslims just as we respect them .... But violence should be avoided, no matter what happens."

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